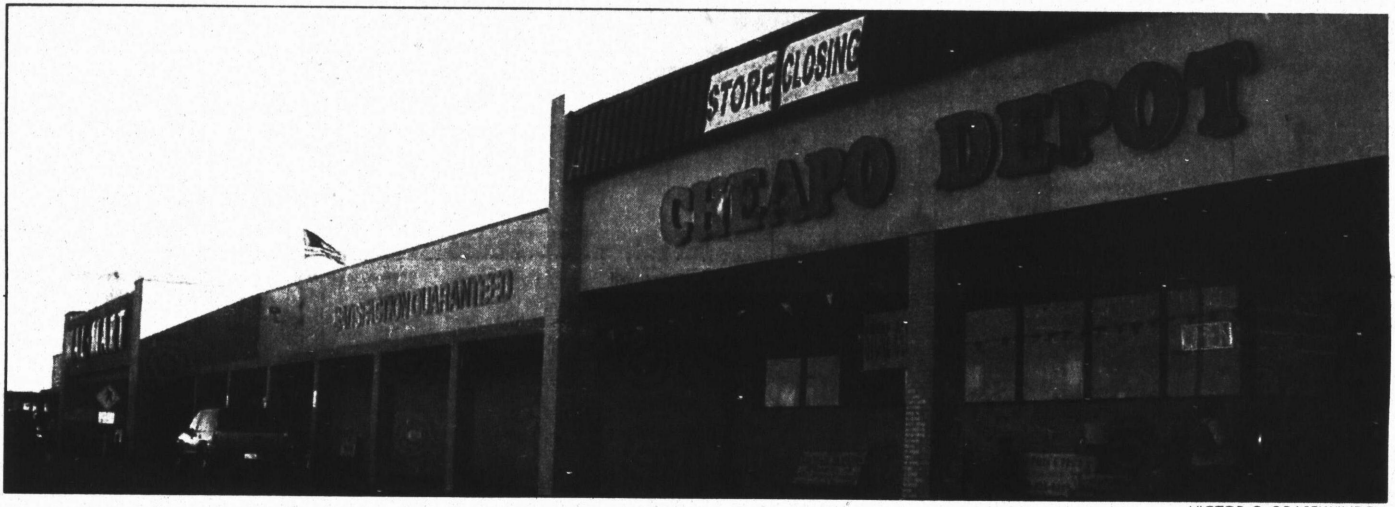
Leaving before the 'gorilla' arrives



VICTOR O. OBASEKI/INDEX

Though a neighbor of Wal-Mart for many years, the owners of the local Cheapo Depot store say they are closing before the new Wal-Mart Supercenter opens, fearing that the local economy will not be able to sustain their operation.

"With the 9,000-pound gorilla that is building across the street, we don't want to get washed out by the tidal wave that is going to remove the other small businesses in that area.

— GLEN GUTHRIE
CHEAPO DEPOT OWNER

■ Construction on the new Supercenter has just begun, but one local retailer concedes and bows out early

BY VICTOR O. OBASEKI
Index Staff Writer

After 12 years here, Cheapo Depot is leaving Mineral Wells.

Although they do not know exactly when they will shutter the discount store, owners Glen and Lisa Guthrie of Godley said this week that they decided in November to permanently close the doors sometime before their lease is up in the summer.

The Guthries said they are shutting down the store, which sits off Garrett Morris Parkway between Wal-Mart and Brookshire's, because of a lagging economy and the business they expects to lose to the incoming Wal-mart Supercenter, expected to open in October.

"The economy of this town won't support our store," Lisa Guthrie said in a phone interview. "And with the fear of the Wal-Mart super store coming in, we just won't be able to make it anymore."

Glen Guthrie said as gas prices have gone up during the last couple of years the business has consistently lost money or broken even.

"I hate to leave, but it's called capitalism," the owner said. "And I don't have enough sales to make it work."

An official of Across Asset Management of Houston, which leases the space occupied by Cheapo Depot and Brookshire's, said this week that it had recently found out about the departure and would seek to find another company to take over the space.

The couple owns a Fort Worth-based wholesale business and

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